(ID) Act in both Central and State sphere. According to this information, the number of establishments, which were closed down during 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 were 154, 175, 159* and 136* respectively. The number of industrial units closed under the ID Act without informing the Government, is not maintained by the Labour Bureau. However, based on information collected from the Central Industrial Relations Machinery (CIRM), 167 cases were identified in the Central sphere where closure of industrial units under the ID Act was effected between 1997 to 2000 without informing the Government. These establishments had closed down under statutory/Court orders or had closed down after transferring workers to other establishments. Other units, which were closed down without informing the Government, had been employing less than 50 workers. Information on establishments in the State sphere, which had closed down without informing the government, is not maintained by the Central Government.

Handling over of old Army horses to Serum Vaccine Firms

*359. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that old horses of the Army were handed over to the serum vaccine firms, leading to their painful death; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) As per existing policy, animals (horses and mules) over 18 years of age and unfit for Military Service, but in a satisfactory state of health and free any infectious or contagious diseases, were given free of cost to six Serum Producing Institutes, engaged in the production of life saving vaccines for human and veterinary use.

However, on account of recent reports about ill treatment of these animals, at some of these institutes, no animal from Army has been issued to any serum institute after 1.11.2000.

Non-IFS Ambassador/High Commissioners

*360. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons from Non-IFS category who have been working as Ambassadors/High Commissioners etc.;

(b) the number of IFS officials eligible for such posting who are in waiting; and

(c) whether there are any vacancies in these posts which are yet to be filled up as on date?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) A total of nine persons from the non-IFS category are serving as Ambassadors/High Commissioners in Missions abroad as of date.